



Safehouses North

professional fostering service

A3 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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The Safehouses North Ltd Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually.

1. **Status and Constitution of Safehouses North Ltd**

1.1 **Status**

Safehouses North Ltd. is a company registered in April 2005 at Companies House. (Registration No 5422189).

Safehouses North is a voluntary organisation as defined by section 105 of the Children Act (1989).

- C.R.B checks are undertaken on all foster carers, carers' children over 16, Safehouses North staff, baby-sitters, regular visitors to the foster carers' home and Fostering Panel members.
- Additional government checks are undertaken on foster carers.
- A copy of the Statement of Purpose is available upon request to any local authority, person working for the fostering service, any foster carer or prospective foster carer of the fostering service, any child placed with a foster carer by the fostering service or parent of any such child.

Safehouses North is fully aware of Government initiatives in the support and protection of children and is committed to working with placing local authorities in order to assist them in meeting the prescribed objectives for Looked After Children.

Safehouses North is a member of the National Joint Forum for Independent Fostering Providers, Fostering Network (formerly NFCA) and the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). This ensures up-to-date knowledge in relation to the provision of a fostering service.

1.2 **Constitution**

Safehouses North Ltd. is owned and operated by the Director: -

Louise King

Also, the 2nd Director –

Anne Palin (who is also a Director of the National Teaching & Advisory Service).

They operate from:

Safehouses North Ltd. (Registered office): Calf Hey Barn, Oldham Road, Denshaw, Oldham OL3 5SN Tel 01457 829111 Fax 01457 810810
fostering@safehousesnorth.org.uk.

They have appointed the accountants William Giles of Rochester, to oversee their financial matters and to prepare their annual accounts.

The Directors have undertaken to operate Safehouses North in line with good company and accounting procedures and to abide by the requirements of Companies House.

The Directors will meet as may be required throughout the company year, and will hold an annual meeting to discuss its current and future operation.

The Directors have set policies and procedures in place to enable Safehouses North to meet the requirements of various local authorities accreditation criteria, and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

2. The Foster Carers

Safehouses North Ltd. will, after applying its rigorous vetting and selection procedures (detailed elsewhere), engage foster carers to carry out the work of caring for children and young people placed into the agency's care. It will provide 24 hour support and appropriate training to enable them to carry out their work and to develop their skills for the future.

3. The Staff

Safehouses North Ltd. will be managed by the Directors who will appoint other management, administration and social work staff.

The Directors will abide by all current and future employment legislation as may from time to time apply, and by their own employment policies and procedures.

4. Accreditation and Registration

Safehouses North is registered with Ofsted, and has been inspected and found to be operating in accordance with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards (Fostering Services Regulations 2002).

Safehouses North Ltd. will subject itself to accreditation processes that may be required by its service users (local authorities) to ensure that it provides a safe and secure environment and standards of care relevant to the children and young people who are looked after.

Safehouses North Ltd is a member of the Placements North West Regional Accreditation Scheme.

5. Fees and Charges

Safehouses North undertakes to keep under review its running and operating costs and to set its fees at a level which maintains a value for money service.

6. Management Structure

The management structure of the company is shown in the schematics attached as Appendix A.

7. Services Provided

Safehouses North Ltd places great importance on ensuring a good match between child and foster family. Safehouses North will decline a placement

rather than place a child in a mis-matched placement or an inappropriate environment. Our aim is that foster care is a positive experience for all children, young people and foster carers. *Safehouses North* undertakes to inform local authority social workers as soon as possible if a suitable placement cannot be offered.

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8. Mother and Child Placements

Safehouses North Ltd seeks to provide a supportive family environment in which a young mother (or father) can develop the necessary parenting skills. This is a flexible scheme designed to offer a range of options to both local authority and young parents. Detailed monitoring and assessments over a fixed time scale can be undertaken, as well as training in areas of identified need. This may include advice, support and counselling on education, career possibilities, childcare issues, and issues of personal development.

9. Sibling groups

Safehouses North can provide foster carers who are able to take large sibling groups. These carers are experienced in dealing with such placements and the complex dynamics they create. Their experience covers both short and long-term placements.

In addition, Safehouses North foster carers are encouraged to get to know each other and develop positive relationships, which makes it possible to place sibling groups within two fostering families, facilitating frequent contact between them.

10. Children and young people with special needs

Safehouses North has several foster carers who are able to provide for children and young people with special needs. In addition, these carers are sometimes able to offer respite care to complement other arrangements that have been made for the child, e.g. residential school placement.

Safehouses North recognises that foster carers providing a home for children with special needs require additional support and training. The agency works actively with specialist services in order to access optimum provision and enable a young person to achieve their maximum potential.

11. Respite Care

Safehouses North provides carers who will look after children for periods of respite from their main place of care, such as children in residential placements, or from other foster placements. Because Safehouses North foster carers are encouraged to get to know each other and the children in placement, respite can often be facilitated with the minimum disruption to the children involved.

12. Teenage Placements, Preparation for Independence and Aftercare

Safehouses North has a commitment to improve outcomes for care leavers. All the good work done by foster carers can be undermined if effective plans are not made for moving a child or young person on to independence. *Safehouses North* staff seek to work creatively with local authorities, children, young people and foster carers in order to ease the transition to adulthood.

Safehouses North carers have extensive and varied experience in dealing with teenage placements, and recognise the difficulties encountered by many teenagers in the care system. Safehouses North foster carers and supervising social workers discuss with the young person what help and training they need, and facilitate programmes of activities to develop young people's ability to survive independently. Pathway plans are developed in conjunction with the placing local authority to provide a formal structure for this work.

Once plans are made to move a young person into independence, Safehouses North will work actively with the placing authority to identify the most appropriate solution for them. If it is desirable that they remain near their foster carers, Safehouses North will explore all local possibilities and arrange for their carers to provide support, on a per session basis, at pro rata cost.

13. Monitoring outcomes for looked after children

Safehouses North seeks to monitor its performance by regular reviews and by maintaining records as to the outcomes of placements. Safehouses North believes that information gathered by regular monitoring can inform national strategies aimed at improving services for looked after children

Young people are encouraged to preserve the relationships they have made with their foster carers when they move on from Safehouses North. By encouraging this contact, Safehouses North can monitor long term outcomes for young people leaving care.

14. Assessments

Safehouses North will provide placing local authorities with an assessment of the progress of individual placements. Safehouses North social workers and foster carers have extensive experience in this area, and have carried out assessments in a variety of situations - including mother and baby placements and preparation for moving on to independence. At each review, the supervising social worker, in conjunction with the foster carers and the foster child, will provide an overview of the placement to date.

15. Education

Safehouses North is aware that most children in foster care are disadvantaged educationally.

In recognition of this need Safehouses North provides the following: -

Safehouses North works in partnership with the National Teaching and Advisory Service (NT&AS) to offer a co-ordinated approach to education and care for children and young people placed with foster carers.

Children and young people placed with Safehouses North foster carers; have a dedicated teacher from The National Teaching & Advisory Service allocated to them to assess their educational needs. Their role is to ensure that a child or young person's needs are identified at the point of placement and the provision of a structured and individual educational programme is made available if required.

Safehouses North has developed excellent links with local schools, further education colleges and with the Adult Education Service.

16. Therapy

Many of the children and young people referred to Safehouses North have a need for therapeutic input. Safehouses North work with the placing authority to assess the most appropriate type of therapy, and will arrange this in-house if required; or, Safehouses North will endeavour to facilitate completion of therapy already in place. As well as access to in-house therapy provision, Safehouses North have access to a wide variety of therapists and counsellors who are experienced in dealing with the difficulties experienced by children and young people. If a psychological assessment is deemed necessary, then this may incur additional costs to the placing authority.

17. Supervised Contact

Safehouses North can supervise contact between foster children and their families by arrangement with the placing authority. Facilities for contact can be made available.

18. Life Work

All Safehouses North carers are required to keep relevant memorabilia for the children they foster and to work with them on understanding their past history. Safehouses North social workers may also undertake lifework with specific foster children in negotiation with their local authority.

19. Providing for ethnic diversity

Where possible, Safehouses North will place children or young people with carers from their own ethnic background. However, Safehouses North recognise that ethnicity may not be the only significant 'matching' criteria. If carers from the same ethnic background are not available, Safehouses North will seek to provide a package of support tailored to a child's cultural needs, e.g. support from a mentor from the appropriate ethnic background.

20. Confidentiality

Safehouses North has a clear and published policy regarding confidentiality. This policy is applied strictly to staff and foster carers.

In summary, Safehouses North will treat with the utmost confidence all information it receives and holds on children and young people, their carers, foster carers and staff, whether this is verbal, written or on computer. No such information will be passed on to others unless strict criteria are met, and then only to individual professionals on a need-to-know basis.

Safehouses North will not tolerate deliberate leaking of personal or confidential information by staff or foster carers where such action does not meet with the above mentioned criteria, and will treat the matter as gross misconduct.

21. Child protection

Safehouses North recognises our responsibility in child protection and safeguarding issues and endeavours to maintain safe boundaries for both the children and its carers.

Safehouses North has developed formal links with the local Area Safeguarding Board and has a clear process whereby child protection procedures are implemented.

22. Aims, Objectives, Principles And Standards Of Care

22.1 Safehouses North aims to:

- Provide a fostering service, which is conducted and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively.
- Provide a fostering service, which is managed ethically and efficiently and is easily accessible.
- Provide a well-resourced service, which delivers excellence in foster care.
- Provide a fostering service, which promotes and safeguards the physical and emotional welfare of the children placed in its care, recognising their cultural and religious backgrounds and maintaining their sense of identity.
- To provide relevant policies and procedures to guide this work.
- Ensure that the people who work in and for the agency are suitable to work with children and young people.

- Ensure that the personnel who work for the agency are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children placed in its care.
- Ensure that the number of staff and foster carers and their range of qualification and experience are sufficient to meet the purposes and functions of the organisation.
- Ensure that detail records are kept and are accessible, as appropriate, to the fostering service, individual foster carers and the children placed in its care and their parents.
- Ensure that the premises used as offices are suitable for the purposes.
- Ensure that the agency is financially viable as an organisation and make appropriate remuneration to its foster carers.
- Ensure that the agency Complaints Policy is accessible to children placed within the agency, carers, local authorities, foster carers and others as appropriate.
- Promote a partnership approach between local authorities, foster carers, children and their natural parents and the agency; promoting contact where appropriate, so that a placement has the maximum chance of success.

22.2 Safehouses North Ltd Objectives are:

- To provide a safe and caring environment for the children placed in the agency's care and one in which they are able to develop and reach their full potential.
- To provide a fostering service of the highest quality with a commitment to maximising the full educational potential of children placed with the organisation.
- To adhere to agency policies and procedures and to continually monitor and evaluate the services provided.

22.3 The Standards of Care Followed by Safehouses North Ltd

Safehouses North Ltd provides a fostering service to local authorities which adheres to statutory requirements and nationally recognised standards of care and codes of practice including

- Arrangements for the Placement of Children (General) Regulations (1991)
- Reviews of Children Case's Regulations, (1991)
- DoH Circulars LAC (94) 20 and LAC (98) 2

- The Children Act (1989)
- DoH Children Act Guidance Volume 3 – Family Placements (1989)
- Code of Practice on Recruitment, Assessment, Approval, Training, Management and Support of Foster Carers (NFCA, 1999)
- Assessing Foster Carers. A Social Workers Guide to Competency Assessments (NFCA, 1999)
- Working Together (DoH, 2000)
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Carers (DoH 2000)
- Fostering Services Regulations (DoH 2002)
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (DoH 2002)
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Care Leavers Act 2000
- Children Act 2004

23 Numbers, Relevant Qualifications and Experience of Staff

Current details of staff and their qualifications and experience are available on request.

24. Numbers of Foster Carers

Safehouses North has a target of 35 approved fostering households. The current number of approved foster carers is 27 with 4 more undergoing assessment.

25. Numbers of Children placed.

The target number of children to be placed within the agency is 50. Current placements are available on request.

26. Numbers of Complaints and their Outcomes.

Complaints against the agency, its staff and carers are available on request.

27. Procedures and Processes for Recruiting, Approving, Training, Supporting and Reviewing Carers

27.1 Introduction

Safehouses North provides experienced and committed foster carers who, together with its professional staff, undertake a wide variety of specialist work with children and young people, as well as giving them the stability and security of a normal, nurturing home environment.

Safehouses North foster carers are given a high level of support with 24-hour access to professional help and advice, which enables carers and children alike to feel safe. In addition, they are given on-going training tailored to their individual needs, which are identified at regular reviews. Safehouses North actively encourage all our carers to undertake formal training, to seek NVQ accreditation and to meet CWDC training and development standards.

Carers are also provided with and expected to comply with Safehouses North comprehensive policies and procedures, for example, Safer Caring Policy, to guide them in their care practice.

The homes of foster carers are 'risk assessed' and foster carers are expected to work within Safehouses North Health and Safety Policy.

27.2 Recruitment

Safehouses North is committed to providing excellence in foster care and aims to recruit potential foster carers who are able to meet the high standards of care and professionalism required of them as foster carers for the agency.

Safehouses North recognises the importance of recruiting prospective foster carers who may not have previous experience as foster carers but who have relevant experience, skills, attitudes and the motivation to become professional foster carers.

Any individual making an enquiry who is currently approved as a foster carer for another agency would have to undergo a further Form 'F' assessment.

Safehouses North adheres to the protocol devised by the Joint Forum of Independent Fostering Providers in conjunction with the Department of Health. The protocol contains guidance in relation to the movement of foster carers between providers, (be they local authorities or Independent Fostering Providers) and which recognises that the well being of children already in placement is paramount.

Safehouses North advertises for its carers through local and national newspapers and journals. Many enquiries also come from people who have had 'word-of-mouth' recommendation in relation to *Safehouses North*.

Safehouses North does not directly employ the agency foster carers. They are engaged by Safehouses North on a self-employed basis.

Safehouses North checks all potential applicants, through the Criminal Records Bureau, NSPCC, local authority, health and education records.

27.3 Approval of Foster Carers

Safehouses North assesses prospective carers in accordance with the 2205 BAAF Form F process.

Further information on the approval procedures is available on request.

Safehouses North has established a Fostering Panel which recommends approval and reviews foster carers on behalf of the agency.

- C.R.B Checks are undertaken on all foster carers, carer's children over 16, Safehouses North staff, baby-sitters and Fostering Panel members.
- Additional local authority, health and education checks are undertaken on foster carers.

27.4 Support for Foster Carers

Safehouses North provides initial training for foster carers, and an ongoing programme of training, covering a wide range of topics.

On joining the organisation, foster carers are provided with a Handbook giving detailed practical guidance to carers.

Foster carers receive direct support from their allocated supervising social worker who will visit regularly, daily if necessary, to support a placement and who will provide formal monthly supervision. There is also 24-hours a day, 365 days a year telephone access for carers to professional staff. If necessary, a member of staff will visit 'out-of-hours'.

Carers are encouraged to attend support groups in order to exchange ideas and information. Regular social events are organised so that carers and children are able to meet on an informal basis.

Two weeks paid annual respite care is offered to Safehouses North foster carers and facilitated by Safehouses North as required. Respite is also arranged in exceptional circumstances to support a placement in the event of, for example, illness of a carer. As an alternative to taking up their 'respite entitlement',

carers are paid a daily respite allowance per child. In normal circumstances, foster carers rarely take up the offer of respite, as they understand the importance of minimising the moves of children and young people who are looked after. Should respite be required, this is always done in full consultation with the placing local authority and involves a period of introductions, except in emergency situations, when Safehouses North reserve the right to move a child.

27.5 Review of Foster Carers

- All foster carers' approval is subject to an annual review, which is presented to the *Safehouses North* Panel.
- The Health and Safety Check is included in the Annual Review.
- All local authority checks, NSPCC checks and CRB checks are reviewed every 3 years.
- Medical references are taken up every 2 years

27.6 Training

Safehouses North provides regular programmes of training for carers.

Topics covered include:

Child Protection	Legal Implications	Challenging Behaviour
Sexual and Self-Abuse	Drug Awareness	Equal Opportunities
Race and Racism	Leaving Care	Record Keeping Confidentiality

This list of training courses is indicative of the sessions provided and is not exhaustive. Topics covered will be in accordance with the requirements of the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and will lead towards the completion of individual Personal Development Plans for each foster carer.

A copy of this Statement of Purpose is available upon request to any person working for the purposes of the fostering service, any foster carer or prospective foster carer of the fostering service, any child placed with a foster carer by the fostering service or the parent of any such child.

Safehouses North Ltd – Staff Structure

